

Dwight Mission, Administration Building
Rural Route
Salisaw
Sequoyah County
Oklahoma

HABS No. OK-31

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1931

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

DWIGHT MISSION, ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

HABS No. OK-31

Location: Rural Route, Salisaw, Sequoyah County, Oklahoma.
USGS Marble City Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator
Coordinates: 15/332650/3935540

Present Owner: Under the auspices of the Presbyterian Church (the property is within the Presbytery of Eastern Oklahoma, Synod of the Sun), title to the property is held by the Dwight Presbyterian Mission, Inc.

Present Occupant: Dwight Mission Camp.

Present Use: Summer camp.

Significance: The Dwight Mission, founded in Arkansas in 1822, moved with the Cherokee into the new Cherokee Nation in 1839, the time of the removal from the east, and from the areas in Arkansas in which some eastern Cherokees had already settled. It was the first mission in Cherokee Nation, serving the tribe as a religious and educational center until 1948, with few interruptions. During the Civil War the leaders of the mission, whose sympathies were against slavery, tried steadfastly to keep the mission open, primarily as a place of refuge for citizens who had lost their homes, but ultimately failed. Its existence today makes it the oldest mission in Oklahoma. The building's design is an example of the shingle style.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1917.
2. Architect: D. Everett Waid, 1 Madison Avenue, New York City, was the architect for the 1917 building. Mr. Waid's hiring was made possible from sufficient funds raised by the Women's Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church of New York City.

D. Everett Waid (1864-1939) attended Columbia University's School of Architecture. His early employment as an architect was with Jenney and Mundie in Chicago. In 1898 he moved to New York City where he designed a number of buildings including Long Island Hospital in Brooklyn; McGregor Sanatorium near Saratoga Springs, New York; buildings at Monmouth (Illinois) College; and Worcester College in Ohio.

3. Original and subsequent owners: The property upon which the mission was built was originally a town, Lovely's Courthouse (also known as Nicksville), which was founded by Major Lovely of Arkansas, after a treaty was reached between him and the Osage, as an attempt to create a buffer zone between that tribe and the Cherokee. This zone was a strip of land forty miles wide and five hundred miles long, and was to be called Lovely County, Arkansas. A few cabins surrounded the original town. Federal allocation of the land as part of the new Cherokee National dissolved the county, and the town of Lovely's Courthouse was agreed upon by the missionaries and the tribe as the site for the new mission. The property has been held by the mission since that time (Campbell).
4. Original plans and construction: Substantial support for the construction came from the Women's Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church of New York, primarily from the women of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church.

Plans for the 1917 Building are in the possession of Mr. John Hulcher, presently chairman of the committee responsible for buildings and grounds. Today much of the building's appearance remains unchanged.

5. Alterations and additions: Repair work on this structure was restricted to replacement of worn materials. The plumbing and heating system was modernized in 1973.

B. Historical Context:

The Dwight Mission was established August 25, 1820, by the Rev. Cephas Washburn and the Rev. Alfred Finney, with the help of Jacob Hitchcock and James Orr. It was on Illinois Bayou on the Cherokee Reservation in Arkansas, which was near the Cherokee Agency. Building commenced almost immediately, and the first classes for Cherokee children were held at the Mission on January 1, 1822. The Mission was named for the Rev. Timothy Dwight, who was the president of Yale University and an organizer of the American Board of Foreign Missions.

With a permanent home established for the Cherokee by treaty in 1828, removals began, both voluntary and forceful, to the Cherokee Nation in Indian Territory. Dwight Mission applied to the various authorities of Government and church to be allowed to re-establish themselves among the Cherokee. Permission was granted, and a committee selected the site of the former town of Lovely's Courthouse as the new Mission site. The area consisted of thirty-five acres of land under cultivation and ten log cabins, plus about two hundred acres of good bottom land. In 1829 the Mission closed in Arkansas and made the move to the Cherokee Nation. The school re-opened soon after, and continued smoothly until the Civil War. In 1862, after the battle of Pea Ridge, Arkansas (March 6, 7 and 8), Confederate soldiers sought refuge at

Dwight. They remained there for a week, leaving behind about twenty sick and wounded. From that time, raids and depredations were carried out by both factions, looking after food and supplies. While the raids continued, the Mission became a place of refuge for the Cherokee who were displaced by the war, especially those who sided with the North (Southern sympathizers tended to seek asylum in Texas). The head of the Mission at that time, Rev. Wiley, eventually was forced to seek refuge in the nearby hills. Later he was made a prisoner of the Confederacy. He escaped and returned to the Mission, and began to prepare the ground for the planting of corn, to feed the numerous refugees still at Dwight. The seed was obtained from nearby Hildebrand's Mill, which serviced the area. Finally, in 1864, the Mission was abandoned, and the seven remaining missionaries sought refuge at Fort Gibson. Dwight Mission was at that point completely desolated, short of supplies and furnishings, and having suffered the loss of several buildings. It remained closed until 1886, when the Cherokee National Council, acting upon requests of numerous sectors of the Nation and the United States, authorized the re-opening of the school. It functioned as a missionary boarding school for girls until 1895, and as a day school in 1900. Between 1900 and 1901, under the guidance of the Rev. Frederick Schauß, Dwight became a coeducational Indian Training School.

The decade of the teens was one of disaster, a period of four major fires. The third and most serious of these occurred in 1917, which claimed the lives of thirteen boys. The fourth, the burning of the girls dormitory in 1918, finally forced the closing of the school.

It was re-opened once more in September of 1922, on the recommendation of the National Women's Board of Missions. In the late 1920s the curriculum was expanded to include high school. The program was dropped in 1930 with one class having graduated, that of 1927. In 1941 a ninth grade class was begun, and in 1942 a tenth. The three top grades were then organized as a junior high school. In 1948 the school was closed permanently by a decision of the Synod of Oklahoma in accord with the Board of National Missions, on the grounds that education was generally available in the area at that time, and there was little need for a mission school. It has not reopened, but remains a summer camp and religious retreat center, a capacity in which it had served since 1928.

The various buildings of the Mission were built surrounding a circle in what is known as the campus. The oldest building on the campus is the so-called Walkingstick Lodge, built circa 1900. It is a one-story frame structure built into a bank, with the entire basement exposed at rear. This basement has been used as a craft shop. The dining hall was built in 1913, and is similar to other mission dining halls in Oklahoma, e.g., the Seneca and Sequoyah Missions. The Administration Building follows in sequence in 1917. The Sage Hall and the Washburn Hall, respectively the girls' and boys' dormitories, are identical fieldstone structures which were erected in 1923.

Sage Hall was made possible with funds donated by Mrs. Russell Sage. The superintendent's stone building was also built in 1923. The barn was erected in 1928 by the students of the Mission school as a training project. The caretaker's house was built in the 1930s or 1940s. The guest lodge, and a museum, built in part of materials obtained from the last remaining log structure, were raised about 1955.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Administration Building is a well-preserved example of the shingle style conceived on a grand scale to meet the needs of a mission-retreat. It houses not only the offices and classrooms for the Mission, but also has a large second floor auditorium as well.
2. Condition of fabric: Very good; well-maintained.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The rectangular-shaped building measures 52' (five-bay front) x 68'-1". It is two-stories high, over a full basement story.
2. Foundations: The structure rests upon a poured concrete foundation which provides the basement story with its floor. The lower portion of the basement walls are also of concrete.
3. Walls: The walls are sheathed in wood shingles, painted brown.
4. Structural system, framing: The frame construction which begins midway up the basement level is dependent on studs and 2" x 8" posts at 18" intervals to support the load of the floors. The 6" x 8" posts of the auditorium walls carry the tripled 3" x 12" rafters on which the roof decking is placed, and these same posts provide the anchorage for the 1" and 1/2" diameter steel tension rods which are the bottom chords of the roof trusses allowing the room to be free of any interior supports obstructing vision.
5. Porch: The front (east) porch is composed of a concrete floor approximately a foot high and four feet deep across the entire front of the building. Six square boxed columns, equally spaced, and each two-stories high in height, carry the flat hipped-style porch roof. The pilasters are at the corners of the porch, hammered to wall of the front elevation.

A concrete pad serving as a landing for the fire escape is on the south elevation.

6. Chimney: There is only one chimney. It is square in plan, of brick, and rises to well above the height of the roof's ridge on the exterior of the north side of the building between the third and fourth bays.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: The front doorway, framed in a wood sill and plain board trim on the sides, is topped by a 12-light-transom and a crown molding. The double doors each have four-light sash over two-cross panels; the doors and trim are painted white on the outside and brown on the inside.

The two side doors between the sixth and seventh bays on the second floor level, are at the top of the firescaping on north and south elevations of the building. These doors are six-pane over three-cross panel, simply enframed in plain boards, with both the doors and the enframements painted white.

Two window-sized doors of plank, used for entry from the outside to the coal room, are on the right side of the building, the third and fourth bay openings at the basement level. They are enframed and painted white.

- b. Windows and shutters: There are no shutters. The windows are the typical Colonial Revival types. In the basement, the windows are wooden double-hung sash, painted white, with six-over-six-lights behind a three-cross panel screen with wooden frame painted black. The first floor has wooden double-hung sash painted white with nine-over-nine lights behind a larger 3-cross paneled screen with wooden frame painted black. The second floor stairhall windows, over the front door, are twin 9-light transom sash. The second floor has wooden double-hung windows, painted white with sash of six-over-six-lights. These windows have two paneled screens with wooden frames, also painted black. In the front and rear gables are double-hung sash painted white with four-over-four lights.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: A simple gable roof of gray asphalt shingles in diamond pattern covers the entire building.
- b. Eaves: The side eaves have exposed 2" x 4" rafter ends and novelty board ceilings. The front and rear eaves, or roof overhang, are similarly finished with a novelty board ceiling, but have three brackets under each slope.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The front entrance is in the center bay of the principal (east) facade, between the basement and first floor. From the half landing just inside the double front doors, a wide single flight of stairs ascends to the first floor while on both sides narrower flights descend to the basement.

In the basement a long central corridor is flanked by classrooms: two on the right with a furnace room in between them, and one large classroom, probably at one time used as a recreation room, on the left of the corridor, accessible from it by two doors. At the end of the corridor is the men's room.

On the first floor the plan is much the same. A central corridor is flanked by three rooms on the right, the last two of which have been joined by removing an intervening partition wall. There are also three rooms on the left, the first two of which have been subdivided into offices and library, respectively. Again, at the front of the building, two flights of stairs (over those to the basement) join at a half landing to lead to a single flight which rises to the second floor.

The second floor is primarily an auditorium. Two smaller rooms, used as classrooms, flank the stairs, but these have the capacity to become part of the auditorium space due to their wall sized folding doors. There are four aisles, and thus three sections, the largest section being in the center, where there are nine rows of seats, ten abreast. To either side are nine rows of seats which seat six abreast. All seats are original, and have joined steel frames, wooden seats and wooden backs. The stage, in front of the auditorium (the rear of the building), is approached by 3 steps on either side of the proscenium, which is about 3 feet wide. Two dressing rooms and their respective bathrooms flank the stage, one of each on either side, and these are accessible from both the stage and from doors at the end of the proscenium. In addition, there is a projection room, which is above the stairs previously mentioned, and which is accessible only by a ladder-like plank stairs in the left-hand rear classroom.

2. Stairways: The principal stairway, in the front of the building, is a double, divided symmetrical arrangement: a single center flight with half-landing continued by two-side flights either side. These stairs are open string, with square balusters and 3" square newels supporting a molded handrail. They are varnished.
3. Flooring: The floor of the basement is entirely of unpainted poured concrete. The first and second floors, the stage and projection room all have floors of varnished three-inch tongue-and-groove boards.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls of the basement up to the window sill level (which is about 6 feet from the floor) are of poured concrete, painted white to match the plaster on sawn lath walls and ceiling above. The walls and ceilings of the upper stories are of white or green painted plaster on sawn lath, with the exception of the auditorium and its classrooms, where the studs and joists, roof decking and exterior siding all have been left exposed on the interior, and have been stained brown.
5. Doorways and doors: All of the doorways have simple board trim, and wooden five-cross panel doors, stained brown. Those which serve as entrances to classrooms have wooden six-light (two rows of three lights) transoms above, to aid air circulation. The auditorium entrance doors are four-pane over two-cross panel doors, and the large folding doors of the classrooms in the auditorium are seven cross panel doors, likewise stained brown.
6. Hardware: The majority of the hardware is original to the building, but is not otherwise notable.
7. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating, ventilation: The coal-fed boiler which provided the steam heat through a radiator system has not been in use for some time. Ventilation of the auditorium is increased by a 36" diameter fan over the stair landing at the front of the building, which exhausts to the outside, over the front porch.
 - b. Lighting: Artificial lighting is by means of incandescent bulbs throughout the building. Most of the bare bulbs have white porcelain bowl reflectors.
 - c. Plumbing: The plumbing fixtures are inoperative. In the ladies room only two small flush tank commodes remain despite the fact there are twice as many stalls, and there is a wall hung oval bowl sink. In the men's room, there are two wall hung oval bowl sinks, two wall hung urinals and two flush tank commodes.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The building faces east. It is alongside the end of a long drive, its back to the road. The drive intersects a circular ring drive, by which all the buildings on the grounds are linked, and the administration building is the major building on the west side of that ring, at the edge of a small open lawn.

2. Historic landscape design: The building seems always to have occupied a major focus in the approach from the road, but its purpose, obviously, was to enclose the circular campus on which it fronts. A row of hedges planted on the inside of the ring drive, opposite the front porch, seem to be the only conscious effort at planting for effect.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Early Views: Two photographs of Dwight Mission School House and the Old Log House are in possession of the Presbyterian Historical Society, 425 Lombard Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Not included in the HABS collection.

Slides of Dwight Indian Training School, Marble City, Oklahoma, taken by Presbyterian Church for the U.S.A. Board of National Missions. They are in possession of the Presbyterian Historical Society, 425 Lombard Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Not included in the HABS collection.

Many of the sources listed below are completely illustrated, especially Mr. Campbell's book, which contains nearly all significant pictures.

- B. Interviews:

Interview with Mr. John Hulcher of Tahlequah, Oklahoma, August 13, 1975. Mr. Hulcher is currently in charge of the buildings and grounds at Dwight and is deeply committed to its continued functioning and preservation.

- C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Presbyterian Historical Society. Letters from Mrs. Cassandra Sawyer Lockwood describing journey to the Cherokee County west of the Mississippi, 1838, with notes and biographical sketches, 12 items. Not included in the HABS collection.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Presbyterian Historical Society. Typed notes. Early mission work in Oklahoma, especially among the Indians, from "Historical Sketches of Presbyterian Missions."

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Oklahoma Historical Society. Indian Archives, Cherokee Education. Letters and papers dealing with the allotment of lands to Dwight Mission, the latter having made a claim for land greater than the four acres prescribed by law. Letter, F. L. Schaub, superintendent, to A. B. Cunningham, Executive Secretary of the Cherokee Nation.

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Oklahoma Historical Society. Indian Archives, Indian-Pioneer History. Letter of Mrs. J. O. Rhodes describing life at Dwight, having lived there for two years, dated February 9, 1839. Interview with Mrs. Susan K. Morrison, February 14, 1938, catalog No. 13151, pp. 401-403.

2. Secondary and published sources:

"An Act Relating to Old Owight Mission" November 29, 1886, in Laws and Resolutions of the Cherokee National, Regular Session and Extra Session, 1884-86. E. C. Boudinot, Jr., printer, Cherokee Nation, Tahlequah, 1887.

Campbell, O. B. Mission to the Cherokee. Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: Metro Press, Inc., June 1973.

Daily Oklahoman. Newspaper article. "Dwight Mission Rounding Out 100 years of service," p. 1, September 23, 1928.

Muskogee Times-Oemocrat. Newspaper article. "New Bright Era Opens at Old Dwight Mission," p. 1, June 16, 1955.

Tulsa Daily World. Newspaper article. "Discontinuance of Historic Mission Ends 128-year Cherokee Era" section 1, part 1, page 10, Sunday, May 23, 1948.

Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Bd. of National Missions, Unit of Education and Medical Work. "History of Owight Indian Training School," June 1948. A copy is at the Presbyterian Historical Society, 425 Lombard Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

True, Mabelle. Old Owight. New York Literature Department of the Women's Board of Home Missions, Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1909. A copy is at the Presbyterian Historical Society, 425 Lombard Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in cooperation with the Oklahoma Historical Society and the Cherokee National Historical Society. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, the project was completed during the summer of 1975, at the HABS Field Office on the campus of Northeastern Oklahoma State University, Tahlequah, Oklahoma, by Michael A. Tomlan (Cornell University), Project Supervisor; John D. Hnedak (Cornell University), Project Historian; Bethanie C. Grashof (University of Florida), Vicki J. Higgins (University of Cincinnati), Nicholas H. Holmes III (Auburn University) and Roger D. Swayze (University of Oregon), student assistant architects. The written descriptive data was edited for permanent HABS collection at the Library of Congress by Susan McCown, a HABS staff historian in the Washington, D.C. office, in the winter of 1981. Walter Smalling, Jr. of Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, U.S. Department of the Interior took the documentary photos of the building in October of 1979.